



National

POISON PREVENTION WEEK PLANNER



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Check out the new downloadable *National Poison Prevention Week* planner below. In the planner, you will find ideas for events and activities, information about how to partner with your local Poison Center as you begin planning your activities, and strategies to promote your events through media and community outreach in conjunction with your Poison Center. **You can reach your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 to find out how you can support existing efforts to celebrate *National Poison Prevention Week* in your community.**

Introduction—This is a 2-page PDF file that describes National Poison Prevention Week, how you can get involved by contacting your local Poison Center, and the role of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in promoting this event nationally.

Event-Planning Materials

Tips for Successful Activity and Event Planning—This a 4-page PDF file with tips for planning an event with suggested activities for specific target audiences. Before you begin planning your event, contact your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line to see what activities already are being planned in your area.

Snapshots of Past Events and Activities—This is a 3-page PDF document that illustrates several events that Poison Centers have implemented in previous years to increase community awareness about poisons, poison safety, and poison prevention.

Event-Planning Resources—This is a 2-page PDF file providing information on *National Poison Prevention Week* Council members as additional event-planning resources. Remember to contact your local Poison Center first to see what organizations your Center may already partner with and activities they may already have planned.

Publicity Materials

Promoting Your *National Poison Prevention Week* Events—This is a 3-page PDF document that provides information on how to promote your event, working in conjunction with your local Poison Center.

Media Advisory Template—This is a 2-page PDF document that provides a template for inviting media to a *National Poison Prevention Week* event. Check with your local Poison Center before distributing a media advisory.

Press Release Template—This is a 2-page PDF file that provides a template for collaborating with your local Poison Center to create and distribute a local press release to interest media in your activities.



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How to Distribute Radio Public Service Announcements—This is a 2-page PDF file that contains scripts that radio DJs can read on air about *National Poison Prevention Week*. Some Poison Centers may distribute their own radio scripts, so contact your local Poison Center first before distributing these.

Proclamation Guide—This is a 3-page PDF file that provides two sample proclamation templates. Many Poison Centers have established relationships with the offices of public officials in your community, so work with your Poison Center to see how you can help secure a proclamation to declare the third full week of March as *National Poison Prevention Week*.

Poison Information

Fact vs. Fiction About Poisonings and Safety—This is a 3-page PDF document that provides clarity on common myths related to poisoning.

Frequently Asked Questions About Poisonings—This is a 10-page PDF document that presents frequently asked questions about poisonings.

Poison Centers—Making the Right Call—This is a 2-page PDF file that provides general information about poisoning and Poison Centers.

United States Poison Centers—This is a 5-page PDF file that lists the nation's Poison Centers, which can all be accessed by calling the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *National Poison Prevention Week*

Thank you for joining the nationwide effort to help prevent accidental poisonings, a leading public health problem. Almost anything can be poisonous if used the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person, but help is available. Through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, the nation's 60 Poison Centers respond to more than 2 million poisoning exposures each year.

During *National Poison Prevention Week*, the third full week of March each year, do your part to educate the public about poisoning risks and what to do about them. The week is an opportunity to highlight the dangers of poisonings for people of all ages and to promote community involvement in poisoning prevention on a local and national level.

Participating in *National Poison Prevention Week* is easy, and every activity—large or small—can make a difference. Throughout the country, Poison Centers conduct activities to raise awareness of the dangers of poisoning. **Poison Centers are your first resource for advice and help in planning activities during that week—and they may have activities already under way that you can support, so it's important to find out first what's already planned.** Refer to the enclosed list of regional Poison Centers provided by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (www.aapcc.org) or visit www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov or call **1-800-222-1222** to find the Poison Center serving your area.

Getting Started: Working With Your Poison Center and Using This Planner

Consult your local Poison Center by calling **1-800-222-1222** before you begin planning your activities to see how you can work together. Then refer to the materials in this planner to prepare and promote any additional activities or events to support your Poison Center's activities. Three types of materials are included:

- Activity and event-planning suggestions that outline a range of activities large and small for you to work with your Poison Center to consider implementing in your community, along with tips and resources for conducting activities during *National Poison Prevention Week* and beyond
- Media advice and template materials that can be customized to promote activities in conjunction with your local Poison Center; be sure to let local media know that your activities are part of a national effort, and coordinate your media outreach with your Poison Center's efforts
- Educational materials with general facts about poisoning risks and prevention, to distribute through events and activities



Joining Forces to Prevent Poisonings, One Step at a Time

After you have reached out to your local Poison Center, consider asking other organizations to take up the cause with you (your Poison Center may have relationships with other organizations that can help). Together with combined resources, you can cast a wider net with your *National Poison Prevention Week* activities.

Find additional groups by thinking about all types of community organizations that may have an interest in poisoning prevention: your chamber of commerce, city or county government, schools, utility companies, and church groups, for example.

When you invite groups to participate with you in *National Poison Prevention Week*, give each organization a clear role. Agree on the goals of your partnership from the start, and establish a group leader who will guide your activities and communicate regularly with all organizations to keep everyone involved. Every activity during *National Poison Prevention Week*—and year-round—is critical for educating people about poison prevention. Even with limited resources, everyone can participate by posting general facts about poisoning and Poison Center resources—included in this planner—on your Web site, and linking to the national Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov, to provide your community with additional information. See the activity and event-planning suggestions in this planner for additional ideas for what you can do, even with limited resources.

What is *National Poison Prevention Week*?

In 1961, Congress established *National Poison Prevention Week* as a national celebration each year during the third full week of March. The observance is sponsored by the *National Poison Prevention Week Council*, a group of public and private partners committed to reducing unintentional poisonings, promoting poison prevention, and coordinating annual activities to promote *National Poison Prevention Week*. For more information and to learn how Council members are observing this week, visit www.poisonprevention.org.

What is Poison Help?

Poison Help is a national campaign funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to educate people about how to prevent a poisoning from occurring and how to respond should one occur. The national Poison Help Web site (www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov) provides resources for parents, teachers, health professionals, and local businesses. It can be used to help with poison prevention activities and provides information for you to locate and contact your local Poison Center. People can also contact their local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, for educational materials, information, and assistance with a poisoning emergency in 161 languages.

HRSA is the primary Federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable. HRSA provides national leadership, program resources and services needed to improve access to culturally competent, quality health care. HRSA funds the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, and Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITY AND EVENT PLANNING

By hosting events in conjunction with your local Poison Center in observance of *National Poison Prevention Week*, you will help educate your community about poisoning prevention. **Contact your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line, 1-800-222-1222, to find out what activities they are conducting and how you can partner with them.** Your local Poison Center can also give you ideas and provide you with resources to support your own event. The following recommendations will also help you plan successful events.

Coordinate With Other *National Poison Prevention Week* Activities

Contact your local Poison Center by calling **1-800-222-1222** to learn about other *National Poison Prevention Week* activities and how you can support these activities. Here are some examples of other organizations you can collaborate with (your Poison Center may already have relationships with these types of organizations):

- Local radio and TV stations
- Community organizations, including religious entities, civic groups, fraternities and sororities, and recreation leagues and organizations
- Medical, emergency support, and public health groups
- Education-related organizations, including day care centers, libraries, colleges and universities, and parent-teacher associations
- Businesses, including baby product stores, toy stores, grocery stores, maternity stores, and drug stores/pharmacies

See the “Introduction” within this planner for tips on partnering with your Poison Center and other groups to extend the reach of your *National Poison Prevention Week* activities.

Choosing an Audience and Activity/Event Type

Successful activities and events consider the needs of the community. For example, if your community is largely bilingual, prepare bilingual materials and have bilingual speakers. If your community has a large senior citizen population, avoid holding your event at night and hold your event at a venue that is handicapped-accessible. To learn more about your community's needs, contact your Poison Center.

Here are some ideas for ways you can reach people of various ages during *National Poison Prevention Week* and beyond.



Children

Since the leading causes of poison exposures involve cosmetics, cleaning products, and medicines for children under age 6, an effective event might target those who provide care for children or provide parents and caretakers with information on health care. Targeted audiences could include:

- School-aged children
- Parents and child care providers
- Teenagers/babysitters
- Grandparents/older adults
- Pediatricians and emergency service personnel

Consider reaching these audiences by offering the poison facts included in this planner (such as “Poison Centers—Making the Right Call” and “Frequently Asked Questions”) to your local PTA, Boy and Girl Scout troops, parenting classes, and babysitting classes. Poison Centers also have a variety of resources available for your use. Working with your Poison Center, offer to speak at these groups’ meetings to explain common poisoning risks and what to do if a potential poisoning occurs.

Preteens/Teens

Use of inhalants—household products that are sniffed to get high—among youth in this country is a growing concern, as is prescription drug abuse. The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition and the Partnership for a Drug Free America have reported inhalant use increases of 18 percent among 8th graders and 44 percent among 6th graders. An effective event might be to hold a school assembly with skits that focus on the harm and dangers involved with using inhalants and other drugs.

Adults

More than 70 percent of all poison deaths related to prescription pain killer abuses occur in adults ages 20 to 59. Consider working with your Poison Center to partner with local businesses and organizations to provide resources on poisoning prevention to their employees, such as by hanging posters in common areas. Also, work with local pharmacies to distribute medication safety information.

Older Adults

Older adults are more likely than others to die from poisonings due to medication errors. While these adults account for 5 percent of possible poisonings, they account for 16 percent of poison-related deaths. With your Poison Center, partner with local senior centers to hold programs that review medication safety, such as making a list of all medications taken to share with physicians, ensuring that medications are kept locked up away from children, not sharing medications, and taking them as directed.

Specific Ideas for Events and Activities

Tailor your *National Poison Prevention Week* activities to your needs and available resources. Any activity, large or small, can make a difference. If you and your Poison Center have limited resources, here are a few simple activities that do not require large amounts of time or funding:

- Post general facts about poisoning and Poison Center resources—including in this planner—on your Web site, and link to the national Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov, to provide your community with additional information.
- Call your local radio stations and ask them to read the live-read public service announcements included in this planner during *National Poison Prevention Week*.
- Distribute the poison facts included in this planner to businesses, schools, and other community groups, and encourage them to share this information with others.
- Hold a brown bag lunch at work to educate coworkers and your employer about potential workplace poisoning risks.

In addition, consider the following ideas:

Hold a Local *National Poison Prevention Week* Poster Contest

Many Poison Centers invite children in the community to create a poster that can be used to educate the public about poisoning. If budget allows, work with your Poison Center to host a reception or awards program to recognize participants and present prizes. Don't forget to invite the media for coverage of the event. To broaden your resources, seek sponsors or donations from local businesses, especially those that you contract with for services.

You can also encourage people in your community to enter the *National Poison Prevention Week* poster contest held nationwide. For more suggestions and guidelines, visit www.poisonprevention.org/poster.htm.

Host a Poison First-Aid Class

Work with your local Poison Center to obtain teaching materials so you can coordinate a first-aid class focused on poisoning for your community and workplace.

Partner with Your Local Poison Center to Coordinate a Tour

Depending on the feasibility of doing so at your local Poison Center, consider holding a picnic outside of the facility followed by a small-group tour. Another idea is to collaborate with local schools to offer a tour of your local Poison Center as a field trip, if your Poison Center is equipped to offer tours.

Conduct a Community Health Fair

Invite your Poison Center, local health professionals, firefighters, police officers, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop leaders, 4-H Club leaders, and others to set up booths about poison prevention.

With Guidance from your Poison Center, Create a Look-Alike Display

With the help of your Poison Center, create a look-alike display that shows a variety of potentially poisonous items that look almost identical to non-poisonous items. Examples can be found at [The Missouri Regional Poison Center](#). Showcase the display (with permission) in local libraries, schools, and government buildings.

Hold a Pharmaceutical Take-Back Program or Event

Unwanted and outdated pharmaceuticals pose serious safety and environmental threats, ranging from child poisonings and illegal use to contamination of our streams and drinking water. Work with your Poison Center and local law enforcement to coordinate a free and safe disposal of unwanted, unneeded, and expired medications. Controlled substances require special handling and law enforcement must be involved.

Planning Effective Events in Conjunction with Your Poison Center

- *Start your planning by contacting your Poison Center right away.* Based on your combined numbers and manpower, decide how large your event can be and how many people you will need on hand to help. Together, hold a planning meeting to establish roles and responsibilities, organize material creation and distribution to attendees, select and book a venue based on the size of your event, outline your publicity and media outreach plans (see “Promoting Your *National Poison Prevention Week* Events”), and make other accommodations, such as how you will handle media requests or record the audience’s comments, if needed.
- *Choose a location that easily accommodates members of the media and people with special needs.* Some possible venues for your event include your local Poison Center, police station, firehouse, hospital, health clinic, YMCA, library, YWCA, town hall, community center, church, synagogue, elementary school, college, or university.
- *If there will be a formal program, provide speakers, moderators, and other participants with an agenda for the event.* Ask that they arrive at least a half-hour early. If possible, designate a private space where they can prepare.
- *Be prepared for last-minute changes.* Secure a back-up venue, especially if your event is outdoors. Make sure to include alternative locations in your correspondence with attendees, speakers, moderators, and the media. Also secure a back-up speaker, in case your keynote speaker cancels unexpectedly.
- *Remind speakers to prepare speeches that will not exceed the allotted time frame.* If possible, obtain copies of their speeches beforehand to avoid repetition and to ensure that multiple perspectives on poison prevention are highlighted. Allowing time for audience interaction is important. It is also a good idea to allow a brief window of time for overlap or logistical changes.

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SNAPSHOTS OF PAST EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

For almost 50 years, *National Poison Prevention Week* has helped teach people about poisons, poison safety, and poison prevention. Through partnerships with public and private organizations, Poison Centers help communities understand why poisoning is a public health problem and that it can happen to anyone, at any time, and in any place.

Some examples of the types of events held in previous years include those profiled below. Contact your Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222** to find out how you can work together to celebrate *National Poison Prevention Week* this year.

The West Texas Regional Poison Center Holds Annual Poison Jungle Safari

Summary of Activities: In honor of *National Poison Prevention Week*, the West Texas Regional Poison Center hosts an annual family-friendly bilingual event at the El Paso Zoo. Poison prevention stations are set up throughout the zoo. Each station focuses on a specific category of poisons, such as medications, plants, bites and stings, illegal drugs, household products, environmental hazards, and lead. The first 500 children who complete the Safari receive a free tee-shirt and their own individual poison prevention certificate of completion.

Target Audience: Located directly on the U.S.-Mexico border, the West Texas Regional Poison Center focuses on the English- and Spanish-speaking families that reside in El Paso, TX.

Partners: The El Paso Zoo partners with the Poison Center.

Outcomes: The Poison Jungle Safari has been held for 15 years. In one recent year, the event attracted more than 5,000 participants.

The Georgia Poison Center Gathers Governor's Proclamation and Distributes Poison Information

Summary of Activities: In one recent *National Poison Prevention Week* celebration, the Georgia Poison Center (GPC) distributed press releases to media outlets and secured a proclamation from the Governor, and also distributed poison prevention materials to libraries and poster contest guidelines to elementary schools throughout the State. An informational display and material distribution center was set up at Grady Hospital's clinic atrium and at the Georgia State Capitol. The informational display and material distribution centers included a look-alike display of poisonous items that resemble non-poisonous items. Brochures about medicine safety, pets and poisons, food poisoning, preventing poisonings in the home, bites and stings, and carbon monoxide were also distributed.



Target Audience: The Georgia Poison Center targeted all residents of Georgia.

Partners: Grady Health System, Emory University School of Medicine, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, the State of Georgia, and local community organizations partnered with the Poison Center.

Outcomes: Press releases about poison prevention were published by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension of Hall County and by Emory University School of Medicine. The dangers of poisons and how to prevent poisonings were highlighted on local TV stations. As many as 14 library branches distributed poison prevention informational sheets and gave out bookmarks with the Poison Center's phone number. Numerous posters were received for the poster contest, and six winners were selected and recognized at the GPC annual awards ceremony. Poison prevention instructors from an instructor training program were also recognized at an awards ceremony for their commitment to poison prevention awareness. More than 500 Georgia residents visited the informational display and distribution centers, receiving poison prevention educational materials and promotional items. Finally, a proclamation was signed by the Governor, declaring National Poison Prevention Week in Georgia.

Carolinas Poison Center Distributes Materials for Parents

Summary of Activities: Throughout the month of March in one recent year, the Poison Information & Education Coordinator at the Carolinas Poison Center partnered with local English and Spanish agencies to promote and distribute free "Parent Packs" during a "Poison Pack Blitz" effort. The Poison Center's Parent Packs consisted of a poison safety brochure, a plant safety brochure, a phone sticker, and a magnet. Parent Packs were designed to prevent poisonings and to familiarize North Carolinians with the national toll-free Poison Help line. The English and Spanish Parent Packs were promoted through the Poison Center's Web site, Carolinas Medical Center Web site, the *Charlotte Observer*, and through Latino radio stations. People were encouraged to request Parent Packs by calling Carolinas Poison Center or by visiting the Web site. Latino radio stations also distributed Parent Packs to callers.

Target Audience: The Carolinas Poison Center targeted parents and caregivers.

Partners: Carolinas Medical Center, La Tremenda 1310 AM and La Raza 102.3 partnered with the Poison Center.

Outcome: More than 200 Parent Packs were distributed during a recent *National Poison Prevention Week*.

The Sanford Poison Center in South Dakota Engages First-Graders in Coloring Contest About Poison

Summary of Activity: The Sanford Poison Center has celebrated *National Poison Prevention Week* by distributing coloring contest forms to over 700 first-grade classrooms across South Dakota. Each classroom that submitted coloring sheets for the contest was also entered into a drawing for a "fun box." The "fun box" was full of items from the Sanford Poison Center to make their classroom and home poison safe.

Target Audience: The Sanford Poison Center targeted first-grade students and their teachers across South Dakota.

Partners: Sanford Poison Center, Sanford USD Medical Center, and the South Dakota Department of Education partnered during *National Poison Prevention Week*.

Outcomes: During one year's event, the Poison Center had over 750 students submit coloring sheets, and from those, 20 were selected as contest winners and received \$50 savings bonds.



Northern Ohio Poison Center Hosts K-5 Poster Contest and Educational Curriculum

Summary of Activities: During a recent *National Poison Prevention Week*, the Northern Ohio Poison Center at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital collaborated with local school districts in Cuyahoga and Lorain counties (population of 1.6 million) to host a poster contest, spreading the message of poison safety to children in grades K through 5. Along with the contest, participating schools conducted poison prevention activities in their classrooms, explaining the importance of being poison-smart during *National Poison Prevention Week* and all year long. Schools were provided with age-appropriate lesson plans with a variety of options for teachers to mix and match to create interactive lessons that involved children in hands-on learning.

Target Audience: The target audience was children in grades K through 5 and their families and friends, with whom they were encouraged to share their newfound knowledge and take-home materials.

Partners: Ten schools submitted entries to one recent *National Poison Prevention Week* poster contest. Participating schools had more than 400 students in the K through 5 grade range.

Outcomes: Children were able to express their creativity through learning. Each student was provided with the information needed to be poison-smart, engaged as an advocate in the poison smart message, and given the confidence to spread the message to family members and friends.

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EVENT-PLANNING RESOURCES

In preparation for your *National Poison Prevention Week* event, contact your local Poison Center by calling 1-800-222-1222. Your Poison Center can provide more information about events being planned in your area.

In addition, below is a list of national organizations that currently serve as members of the *National Poison Prevention Week Council*. These groups can be useful resources after you have contacted your Poison Center to help you plan your event. The *National Poison Prevention Week Council's* primary purpose is to sponsor and promote *National Poison Prevention Week* to raise awareness about unintentional poisonings.

For information on each organization, visit the *National Poison Prevention Week Council* Web site (www.poisonprevention.org).

- **The Health Resources and Services Administration:** Patricia Stroup, Acting Director, Poison Control Program, 301-443-1127, pstroup@hrsa.gov
- **The American Association of Poison Control Centers:** Holly E. Wells, Education Manager, 703-894-1864, wells@AAPCC.org, S. Rutherford Rose, PharmD, FAAC, 804-828-4780, rose1@mcvh-vcu.edu
- **The National Safety Council:** Kristin Lolmaugh, Senior Program Manager and Chairman of the *National Poison Prevention Week Council*, 202-974-2469, kristin.lolmaugh@nsc.org
- **The American Academy of Clinical Toxicology:** Rachel E. Donovan, Administrative Director, 610-616-5633, rdonovan@clintox.org
- **The American Academy of Pediatrics:** Bonnie Kozial, Manager, Committee and Section on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, 800-433-9016 ext. 7947, bkozial@aap.org
- **The American Pharmacists Association:** Erin Wendel, Manager, External Communications, 202-429-7558, ewendel@aphanet.org
- **The American Red Cross:** John Thompson, Program Administration, 202-303-5099, thompsonj@usa.redcross.org
- **The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists:** Aretha Hankinson, Public Relations Manager, 301-664-8671, Ahankinson@ashp.org



- **The Art & Creative Materials Institute, Inc.:** Deborah Fanning, Executive Vice President, 781-293-4100, debbief@acminet.org
- **The Closure & Container Manufacturers Association:** Candace Renwall, President, 847-438-2700, crenwall@techbuspart.com
- **The Consumer Specialty Products Association:** Evelyne McFeaters, Director, Communications, 202-833-7317, emcfeaters@cspa.org
- **The Healthcare Compliance Packaging Council:** Peter Mayberry, Executive Director, 703-538-4030, pgmayberry@aol.com
- **Home Safety Council®:** Angela Mickalide, Ph.D., CHES, Director of Education and Outreach, 202-330-4907, angela.mickalide@homesafetycouncil.org
- **The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners:** Felicia Taylor, Director of Membership, Chapters, and Communication, 856-857-9700, ftaylor@napnap.org
- **The Personal Care Products Council:** Lisa Powers, Vice President, Public Affairs & Communications, 202-466-0489, powersl@personalcarecouncil.org
- **Safe Kids Worldwide:** Vivi Cassella, Home Safety Program Manager, 202-662-0629, vcassella@safekids.org
- **The Soap and Detergent Association:** Nancy Bock, VP Education & Meetings, 202-662-2507, nbock@cleaning101.com, Martha Chapin, Manager, Education, 202-662-2509, mchapin@cleaning101.com
- **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:** Kim Dulic, Office of Public Affairs, 301-504-7058, kdulic@cpsc.gov
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food & Agriculture:** Dr. Joseph Wysocki, National Program Leader, NIFA, 202-401-4980, jwysocki@nifa.usda.gov
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control:** Kitt Rodkey, Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, 202-402-2096, clyde.k.rodkey@hud.gov
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:** Darlene Dinkins, Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, 703-305-5214, dinkins.darlene@epa.gov

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PROMOTING YOUR NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK EVENTS

As you work with your Poison Center to plan activities for National Poison Prevention Week held the third full week of March each year, consider how to promote what you are doing to ensure maximum visibility within your community. **Your Poison Center may already have media outreach plans, so be sure to contact them at 1-800-222-1222 to see how you can support existing media efforts.** There are many ways you can collaborate with your Poison Center to promote an event, including reaching out to the members of your local media and engaging local influencers to lend support to your cause. Following are some tips on how to promote your local event during *National Poison Prevention Week*.

Joining With Your Poison Center to Work With the Media

It is the job of your local media (TV, radio, and newspaper) to cover news that affects the area's residents. Reporters may learn about your event and express interest without any prompting, but several things can help you and your Poison Center catch their attention. Provide them with the information they need, in the format they need it, to increase the likelihood that they cover your event.

The single most important ingredient to catch the attention of a reporter is *news*. News by definition is something that has sufficient relevance to the general public or a specific audience. Hosting a local event is often not enough to pique the interest of a reporter. You must give the reporter a sense of the *impact* the issue has on the community and pair it with a local story to provide color. Your Poison Center can help you do this.

Participating in Media Interviews

Media interviews allow you to tell your story and convince readers/listeners/viewers why they should care about your event and how the issue could impact them. It's also an opportunity to emphasize key poison prevention messages, such as the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) and Web site address (www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov) where people can go to get more information. Your local Poison Center can provide additional advice on what to say during an interview about services in your area.



How to Prepare for a Media Interview

Consider the following tips to help you prepare for a media interview:

- Consider your audience and their interests.
- Focus on just a few key messages that are critical to convey in the interview.
- Avoid using jargon, confusing terms, or acronyms.
- Practice. Anticipate what the reporter will ask you and rehearse your answers so they communicate your message in a clear and concise manner.

How to Respond in an Interview

Whether your interview is in person or on the phone, engage reporters in a friendly manner and demonstrate your enthusiasm about the issue—if you don't seem interested, how can you expect them to be interested? Following are a few helpful tips:

- Demonstrate your expertise in or connection to poison prevention in the interview by offering background information about *National Poison Prevention Week*, poison prevention, and poison response.
- Provide the reporter with evidence to support your statements. Do not worry if you are unable to answer a particular question. Instead, offer to get back to the reporter with the information after the interview and follow through on that promise.
- Focus on making a local connection in the interview whenever possible. Local poisoning information is available through your local Poison Center by calling the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**.
- Repeat yourself. Repeat your talking points so the reporter walks away remembering the most important things in the interview. This is *your* interview—use it to get your message across to your community.
- A common technique to get your messages across is to summarize all of your key points at the end of the interview (e.g., “it’s important for your viewers to remember the following three things” or “to summarize, the important thing is...”)
- To personalize the gravity of poison prevention and emphasize the importance of Poison Centers, share stories about real people who have received help from Centers. Note: Be sure you do not violate the privacy of these people in telling their stories.

How to Emphasize the Key Points of *National Poison Prevention Week*

Consider the following speaking points to help you stay on track and convey essential information during your interview.

- More than 2 million poisonings are reported each year across the country. In the state of **[State Name]**, **[insert relevant local/regional poison information]**.
- Your local Poison Center in **[insert location]** works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to your needs in the event of a poison emergency.
- **[Organization Name]** is holding a **[event]** on **[date/time]** at **[location]** to educate people on the dangers of poisonings, how to prevent them, and what to do in the event of a poison emergency.



- This event is a part of the annual National Poison Prevention Week, which has been helping to raise awareness about poison prevention since 1962.
- To learn more about how to prevent a poisoning or respond should one occur, please visit the national Poison Help Web site at www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov, where you can find useful information and locate your local Poison Center.
- Remember, in the event of a poison emergency, contact your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line at **1-800-222-1222**.

Developing Media Materials

Please see the Media Advisory and Press Release templates in this planner to help guide you in developing materials in conjunction with your Poison Center to promote your *National Poison Prevention Week* event.

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MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

A **media advisory** is a one-page invitation for media to attend your event that is distributed up to a week in advance of the event. It tends to follow a “who, what, when, where” format. **Before you distribute a media advisory or plan an event for *National Poison Prevention Week*, check with your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 to find out how you can coordinate with their efforts for the best results.** You may want to adapt the following media advisory language as needed for your event.

Media Advisory

Date

Contact: [Name—Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media]
[Phone Number—Include cell phone if the person is not always available at the office]
[E-mail Address]

[Name of Organization] to Educate Public About Poison Prevention

[Event] being held to underscore the importance of poison prevention awareness during
National Poison Prevention Week

[Introductory paragraph providing background on the reason for the event:] Each year, more than 2 million poisonings are reported to the nation’s 60 Poison Centers, which can be reached through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**. As part of *National Poison Prevention Week*, a national event designated by Congress, [Name of Organization] will host [event] to remind the people of [State or Community] of the dangers of poisons and how to prevent unintentional poisonings among people of all ages.

WHAT: [Description of the event in a few short sentences]

WHEN: [Date and time of the event]

WHERE: [Name and address of the event location]
[Web site of location, if applicable]

WHO: [Name and titles of those who are sponsoring the event and who will be speaking/
featured at the event]

###



About Poison Help

Poison Help is a national campaign funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to educate people about how to prevent a poisoning from occurring and how to respond should one occur. The national Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov, provides resources for parents, teachers, health professionals, and local businesses. It can be used to help with poison prevention activities and provides information for you to locate and contact your local Poison Center. People can also contact their local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, for information and assistance with a poisoning emergency.

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**POISON
Help**
1-800-222-1222

www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

A **press release** is distributed to media prior to an event or when you are issuing new information. It provides reporters with details to cover your story.

Before you distribute a press release for *National Poison Prevention Week*, check with your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 to find out what materials they may be planning to distribute to the media and how you can coordinate with their efforts for the best results. As you consider what your press release should say, you may want to adapt the following language as needed for your event.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Contact: [Name—Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media]
[Phone Number—Include cell phone if person is not always available at the office]
[E-mail Address]

**Sample headline: [Name of Organization] Brings [Name of Community] Together in
Commemoration of *National Poison Prevention Week***

[City, State], [Date]—Each year, [state or community statistic] poisonings are reported in [Name of State or Community]. As part of *National Poison Prevention Week*, [Name of Organization/Poison Center] is hosting [event] on [date] to discuss the dangers of potentially poisonous medicines and chemicals, and to outline preventative steps people can take to ensure the safety of themselves and their loved ones.

[Name of Organization] hopes that this event will bring people together in commemoration of *National Poison Prevention Week*, to ultimately mitigate the number of people who are involved in poisonings each year, especially poisonings in the home—the most commonly reported poisonings.

[Include details of the event—where and when it will be held, and who is in attendance.]



“By educating local residents about preventative steps in the home and in their lives, I believe we can make serious progress in keeping our loved ones safe,” said **[Name and Title of Prominent Local Official]**. “It is vital that people arm themselves with basic information on poison prevention in the home, such as keeping chemicals out of the reach of children and carefully reading the labels and dosages on all products. I applaud the efforts of **[Name of Sponsoring Organization(s)]**, which illustrate the importance of community involvement in important challenges like poison prevention.”

More than 2 million poisonings are reported each year to the Nation’s 60 Poison Centers. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, 93 percent of poisonings happen at home, and 51 percent of poisonings involve children under the age of 6. The majority of fatal poisonings occur among adults, especially older adults.

National Poison Prevention Week was established by the U.S. Congress in 1961 to focus national attention on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. To learn more about ways to keep people of all ages safe and help prevent poisonings, visit the national Poison Help Web site at www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov.

In case of a poison emergency, contact your local Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

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About Poison Help

Poison Help is a national campaign funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to educate people about how to prevent a poisoning from occurring and how to respond should one occur. The national Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov, provides resources for parents, teachers, health professionals, and local businesses. It can be used to help with poison prevention activities and provides information for you to locate and contact your local Poison Center. People can also contact their local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, for information and assistance with a poisoning emergency.

About HRSA

HRSA is the primary Federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable. HRSA provides national leadership, program resources, and services needed to improve access to culturally competent, quality health care. HRSA funds the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) and Poison Help Web site, www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov.

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HOW TO DISTRIBUTE RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Public Service Announcement (PSA) is an opportunity to receive free publicity through broadcast media. Radio disc jockeys allow for very little donated air time, so having a succinct and informative message for them to read on the air is crucial.

Your Poison Center may already have contacted radio stations in your area, so be sure to contact them first at 1-800-222-1222 to see how you can support existing outreach efforts. Once you've determined the best way to proceed, contact your local radio stations to determine the deadline for receiving PSAs, letting them know you would like them to run during *National Poison Prevention Week* in the third full week of March. Ask who should receive the copy and in what format (e.g., fax, e-mail, or mail). Then customize the live-read radio PSA scripts below to promote *National Poison Prevention Week* in your local area.

Three scripts are provided below: a 15-second, 30-second and 60-second version. Offer all three lengths to stations so they can decide when they have space to read them on the air. Remember to double-check the number of seconds for each PSA after you have customized it by reading it aloud before sending it to radio stations.

In addition, please visit www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov to find existing prerecorded radio jingles that you can encourage your local radio stations to play. They can do so in addition to reading the live-read scripts below on the air.

Contact: [Name]—Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media]

[Phone Number]—Include cell phone if person is not always available at the office]

[E-mail Address]

National Poison Prevention Week :15 Radio Public Service Announcement Script

Stations, the following is a public service announcement:

Did you know that just about anything can be poisonous if used the wrong way? Learn more during *National Poison Prevention Week* the third full week of March by calling your Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line at **1-800-222-1222**.



National Poison Prevention Week :30 Radio Public Service Announcement Script

Stations, the following is a public service announcement:

To observe *National Poison Prevention Week*, **[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]** will provide **[OR HOST]** **[FILL IN THE SPECIFIC ACTIVITY, E.G., WILL PROVIDE FREE FIRST-AID TRAINING TO CHILDREN OVER 8 YEARS OLD AND ALL ADULTS]** on **[DATE]**, from **[TIME FRAME]** at **[NAME OF LOCATION AND ADDRESS]**.

For more information, contact **[LIST NAME AND ASSOCIATION OF CONTACT PERSON]** at **[CONTACT PERSON'S PHONE NUMBER]** or call your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line at **1-800-222-1222**.

National Poison Prevention Week :60 Radio Public Service Announcement Script

Stations, the following is a public service announcement:

To observe *National Poison Prevention Week*, **[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]** will provide **[OR HOST]** **[FILL IN THE SPECIFIC ACTIVITY, E.G., WILL PROVIDE FREE FIRST-AID TRAINING TO CHILDREN OVER 8 YEARS OLD AND ALL ADULTS]** on **[DATE]**, from **[TIME FRAME]** at **[NAME OF LOCATION AND ADDRESS]**. The purpose of this event is to teach members of our community, such as **[FILL IN THE SPECIFIC AUDIENCE, E.G., CHILDREN or SENIOR CITIZENS]**, about poisonings and promote community involvement in poisoning prevention. *National Poison Prevention Week* is held the third full week of March and aims to educate communities on the dangers of poisonings.

For more information, please contact **[LIST NAME AND ASSOCIATION OF CONTACT PERSON]** at **[CONTACT PERSON'S PHONE NUMBER]** or visit **[WEB SITE OF LOCAL POISON CENTER]**.

Anything can be poisonous if used the wrong way—even everyday household items. If you suspect a poisoning of a loved one, or if you have questions regarding poisons, call your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line at **1-800-222-1222**.

###

National Poison Prevention Week was established by the U.S. Congress in 1961 to focus national attention on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. To learn more about how to help prevent poisonings, visit www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov.

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PROCLAMATION GUIDE

Work with your Poison Center to secure a proclamation from your Governor, Mayor, member of Congress, or other local official for your *National Poison Prevention Week* event. An endorsement from a policymaker attracts attention from the community and the media, and often lends credibility to your efforts. **Your Poison Center may already have contacted public officials in your area, so be sure to contact them first at 1-800-222-1222 to see how you can support existing outreach efforts.**

Expanding the Reach of Your Proclamation

Here are a few ways to increase awareness of your proclamation after it has been endorsed:

Event Activity

Work with your Poison Center to hold an event where the public official actually signs the proclamation as part of your *National Poison Prevention Week* event.

Media Outreach

Coordinate with your Poison Center to distribute the proclamation to reporters who cover local, community, metro, city, education or health news. Include a press release about your event or media advisory inviting the reporter to your event or proclamation signing. Please refer to the press release and media advisory templates included in this planning guide for more details.

After you distribute the proclamation and news release, follow up with the reporter to ensure that s/he received the materials. Reporters may be interested in interviewing the local official who issued the proclamation. Also offer reporters interviews with a Poison Center representative who can better describe the event and convey its significance to the local community.

Community Outreach

Display copies of the proclamation along with fliers about your event in common areas of local public places, such as libraries and government buildings. This will encourage participation in the event. Be sure to request permission from the places you wish to post the flier and proclamation, and find out whether your Poison Center already has similar plans in the works.



Following are two examples of *National Poison Prevention Week* proclamations. Most public officials accept proclamations written in a traditional format (see Sample 1 below, which uses phrases that begin with the word “Whereas,”), but some will also accept proclamations written in a more modern format (see Sample 2 below). Please adopt the template that best addresses your needs.

Proclamation Guide: Sample Proclamation Template 1

WHEREAS: Congress designated the third full week in March to be *National Poison Prevention Week* in 1961, and since then this week has helped to raise national awareness of the dangers of potentially poisonous medicines, household chemicals, and other substances; and

WHEREAS: Each year, more than 2 million potential poisonings are reported to the Nation’s Poison Centers; and

WHEREAS: Approximately 90 percent of poisonings occur in people’s homes; and

WHEREAS: Over 50 percent of poisoning exposures involve children under age 6; and

WHEREAS: [Name of Organization(s) Hosting Event] have created [Name of Event] to highlight [Name of State or City]’s commitment to protecting its residents from potentially harmful poisonings; and

WHEREAS: The people of [Name of State or City] recognize the importance of coming together as a community to educate ourselves on poison prevention, and pledge our commitment to ensuring the safety of ourselves, our families, and our community;

NOW, THEREFORE: I, [Name], [Title of State or Community], hereby proclaim [Dates] to be *National Poison Prevention Week* in [State or Community] and encourage all to join in this observance.

[Insert City/State or Other Official Seal]

Proclamation Guide: Sample Proclamation Template 2

National Poison Prevention Week

A Proclamation by [Local Official’s Name and Title]

Since 1961, the third full week in March has been designated *National Poison Prevention Week*, focusing national attention on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. Established by the U.S. Congress, *National Poison Prevention Week* is commissioned by the *National Poison Prevention Week Council*. During this week, we come together as a community to educate ourselves on poison prevention, and pledge our commitment to ensuring the safety of our families, communities, and each other.

Each year, [community statistic] possible poisonings are reported to our region’s Poison Center. Across the United States, Poison Centers handle 1 possible poisoning every 13 seconds and more than 2 million yearly. To prevent these poisonings from happening to you or a loved one, parents, teachers, nurses, and everyone in the community should take measures to ensure that unintentional poisonings are being prevented. A few ways to prevent a poisoning from happening include placing household chemicals out of the reach of children, storing items in their original containers to avoid confusion, and reading product labels, including the recommended dosages on all products. Older adults should take special precautions to understand medication safety.

To learn more about ways to help prevent poisoning, I encourage **[Name of State or Community]**'s citizens to visit the Poison Help Web site at www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov. In case of an emergency, individuals should contact their Poison Center by calling the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**. Poison prevention is the key to safer, healthier lives.

For the above reasons, I am asking the citizens of **[State or Community]** to join me in commemorating **[Dates]** as *National Poison Prevention Week*. I call upon all of **[State or Community]**'s citizens to observe this week by partnering with the **[Name of Poison Center]** and participating in appropriate activities to learn more about how to prevent poisonings.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration, the American Association of Poison Control Centers, the *National Poison Prevention Week Council*, and the **[Name of Organization]** welcome your participation in *National Poison Prevention Week*.

I, **[Name and title of local official]**, do hereby proclaim **[Dates]** as

National Poison Prevention Week

in **[State or Community]** and call upon our community to observe this week in support of poison prevention.

_____ Signature _____ Date

[Insert City/State or Other Official Seal]

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FACT VS. FICTION ABOUT POISONINGS AND SAFETY

FICTION: Poisonings usually involve bleach and other household cleaners.

FACT: Household cleaners are just one type of poison. These products do cause many poisonings. Be aware that other poisons found at home can be just as dangerous. We keep many products around the home that we don't think of as poisons.

Among children, all of these things often cause poisonings:

- Medicines
- Pest killers
- Hydrocarbons (such as lamp oil, kerosene, gasoline, lighter fluid)
- Plants

Among adults, all of these things often cause poisonings:

- Pain medicines
- Alcohol
- Bites and stings
- Spoiled food
- Beauty products

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poison that can kill children and adults. CO is a gas that has no smell. You can't see it. You don't know when it's present. That makes it VERY DANGEROUS.

So, when it comes to poison prevention, be aware of ALL poisons. Almost anything can be poisonous if taken at the wrong time or in the wrong amount.

FICTION: Poinsettias are deadly.

FACT: Poinsettias are not deadly. But the plant does cause minor discomfort in some people. Many plants are poisonous. If a child eats any part of a non-food plant that people are not supposed to eat—or for more information—call your local Poison Center through the national toll-free Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**.



FICTION: Poisonings are not a great safety risk. People are hurt more often in cars, fires, and other accidents.

FACT: Poisonings happen more often than car accidents or house fires. That's true especially among young children. Did you know that each year in the United States:

- About 1 million possible poisonings are reported for children under 6.
- Approximately 90 percent of poisonings occur in the home.

Also, many people don't know about the poison risks linked to many products. So people are less careful about poison safety than about car or fire safety. It is important to (1) be aware of the dangers of different poisons and (2) take the same amount of care with poison safety as with other dangers.

FICTION: Regular operators answer the national toll-free Poison Help line.

FACT: Health care experts, including pharmacists, nurses, doctors, and poison experts work at Poison Centers across the country. One of these experts will answer the phone when you call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**). All of these medical experts have passed special training to handle poison emergencies. Also, they are EXPERTS WHO SPECIALIZE IN THE ISSUES OF YOUR COMMUNITY. They are trusted by local doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and emergency workers. And they offer the best information on poison-related questions and treatments.

FICTION: Because Poison Help is a national number, it is hard for the experts to provide local help.

FACT: There are 60 Poison Centers around the country. If you call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**), you are connected to the Poison Center in your area. YOU WILL TALK TO A LOCAL EXPERT. For any poison emergency or question, call your Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222**. You can talk to an expert any time of day or night, 7 days a week. Call this number from anywhere in the United States.

FICTION: The Poison Help number is only for emergencies. You should use it only when someone shows signs of poisoning.

FACT: If you think someone has been poisoned, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**). DON'T WAIT for signs of poisoning. Many poisonings can be avoided with a call to Poison Help. Your problem can most likely be solved on the phone. The medical experts will provide help for any possible poisoning, even if you are not sure if a poisoning has occurred. Call the national toll-free Poison Help line if you think your child may have swallowed poison. Call Poison Help if you have eaten food that was left out too long. DO NOT WAIT for signs of poisoning. Check with an expert at Poison Help (**1-800-222-1222**).

Poison Centers also provide teaching materials and services so you can learn about poisoning prevention BEFORE a problem arises.

FICTION: Most poisonings can be avoided by using basic common sense.

FACT: Common sense and awareness are valuable in poison prevention. Many people believe their common sense is enough to protect them, but common sense is not enough. It is still important to actively learn about poison safety. More than 80 percent of events reported to Poison Centers are accidents. Most reports involve common household products (such as medicines, cleaning products, and personal care products). Poisonings can happen because people mix medicines or keep products in unmarked containers. It can also happen when

people do not install carbon monoxide alarms or they leave cabinets unlocked. Often, poisonings could have been avoided by learning about and following simple steps.

FICTION: The national toll-free Poison Help line is important only for parents of young children.

FACT: Poison Help is an important tool for adults and children. Did you know that 50.7 percent of possible poisonings occur in children under age 6, BUT more than 70 percent of all poisoning deaths occur in adults ages 20 to 59?

Many adults are unaware that alcohol, medicines, and other products can poison you. Also, many adults do not guard against carbon monoxide poisoning. The national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) can provide help with ANY poisoning situation, no matter your age. You can talk to an expert 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

FICTION: If someone has been poisoned, call 911, not Poison Help.

FACT: 911 is the number to call in emergencies. If it does not appear to be a life-threatening emergency, call the national toll-free Poison Help line for poisoning help. Poison Help is best at handling poisonings and answering questions about them. Often an expert at the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) can help you over the phone. The expert can give first aid advice. He or she can tell you what to look for. In fact, about 70 percent of poisonings are taken care of over the phone. A call to the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) could save you money on a costly emergency room visit.

If the poison expert thinks you have an emergency that requires hands-on care, the expert will tell you to call 911. It is important to keep 911 in mind for ALL other emergencies. In any situation—even poisonings—if someone is not breathing, you should call 911 fast!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT POISONINGS

- [Basic First Aid Tips](#)
- [Calling Poison Help](#)
- [Poisonings](#)
 - Household Products
 - Medicine
 - Pesticides or Pest Killers
 - Pets, Animals, Bites, Stings
 - Plants
 - Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Basic First Aid Tips

A poisoning may have occurred. What should I do?

Follow these basic steps at the first sign of a poisoning:

- The person inhaled poison.
 - Get to fresh air right away.
 - Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).
- The person has poison on the skin.
 - Take off any clothing the poison touched.
 - Rinse skin with running water for 15 to 20 minutes.
 - Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).
- The person has poison in the eyes.
 - Rinse eyes with running water for 15 to 20 minutes.
 - Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).



In some cases, you should not try to give first aid. You will need to call for help fast if:

- The person has collapsed or stopped breathing.
 - Call 911 or your local emergency number.
- The person swallowed the wrong medicine or too much medicine.
 - Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).
- The person swallowed a chemical, pesticide, or other poison.
 - Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).

What should I do if my child swallows something poisonous?

Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) right away. Every poisoning is different, and treatment advice will depend on the type and amount of poison involved. The child's age, weight, and medical history will affect treatment, too.

Should I use activated charcoal when I suspect someone has been poisoned?

No. Activated charcoal addresses certain poisons, but it is difficult to use. Your Poison Center will decide if activated charcoal should be used. The Poison Center may call a hospital to advise what type of treatment to use.

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Calling Poison Help

What is the national toll-free Poison Help line?

The national toll-free Poison Help line is **1-800-222-1222**. When you call the number, you will reach a Poison Center IN YOUR AREA.

What should I do when I need to call for help?

When you call the national toll-free Poison Help line, be ready to give information (listed below) to the expert on the phone. It is important to stay calm. Not all medicines and household products are poisonous. Not all contact with poison results in poisoning.

When you call, make sure to have the container of the product you think caused the poisoning. The label has important information. When calling the national toll-free Poison Help line, be ready (if you can) to tell the expert:

- The person's age and weight
- Known health conditions or problems
- The product involved
- How the product contacted the person (for example, by mouth, by inhaling, through the skin, or through the eyes)
- How long ago the person was exposed to the poison
- What first aid has already been given



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT POISONINGS

- Whether the person has vomited
- Your exact location and how long it would take you to get to a hospital

If medicine has been swallowed, do not give anything by mouth until you've talked to a Poison Help expert.

Who will answer the phone when I call 1-800-222-1222?

An expert answers the phone at a Poison Center. You will reach a pharmacist, nurse, doctor, or other poison expert. All of them have passed special training to handle poison emergencies. Also, the person who answers will be an EXPERT WHO SPECIALIZES IN THE ISSUES OF YOUR COMMUNITY. These experts are trusted by local doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and emergency workers. They offer the best information on poison-related questions and treatments.

What should I do if I think someone has been poisoned?

- Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (1-800-222-1222) right away!
- A poison expert will tell you exactly what to do. If necessary, the Poison Center may stay on the phone with you while you get other help. The expert may call you later to ask if you need further help and to see if the poisoning was resolved.
- DO NOT wait to call! If you call right away, the problem can often be solved over the phone. Do not wait for signs of poisoning!

Why should I call a Poison Center?

- Poison experts are available at Poison Centers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When doctors and nurses have questions about poisons, they may call the Poison Center, too.
- When you call the Poison Center in an emergency, often your problem can be solved over the phone. The call is fast and free, and translation services are available in 161 languages. It could save you from calling an ambulance when you don't need one. It could save you from making a trip to the emergency room when you don't need to go.
- If you need a doctor or ambulance, the poison expert will tell you right away. In some cases, the expert may also call the clinic or emergency room. He or she will give important treatment information. This means no time will be lost when the person arrives for additional care.

Can I call the national toll-free Poison Help line if I just have a question, not a poisoning emergency?

Yes. Poison Help can answer most questions about poisons and how to prevent them. The best way to prevent poisoning is to learn about poisoning risks BEFORE an emergency.

What is done with all the information I give the Poison Center?

Calling a Poison Center is confidential, but a written record is made of all calls. The information is entered into a chart. Treatment advice from Poison Center staff is recorded. Information from follow-up calls is recorded too. All information is KEPT PRIVATE. All of the information is used to help make sure you get the best care.

How can I be prepared for a poisoning emergency?

- Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) or visit the Poison Help Web site (www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov) to ask for phone stickers or magnets with the emergency number. Keep the number on or near all your phones. Enter the number into the speed dials of all your phones.
 - If you are taking care of a child, have all the child's health information on hand in case of an emergency.
- See the Poison Help Brochure and Seasonal Tip Sheets at www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov for more information.

Will the Poison Center call me to follow up?

If needed, the Poison Center will call you to make sure the problem was resolved. Poison Center staff will know how many times to check on you. The number of calls depends on the type of exposure and on your overall health.

What type of person most often calls the national toll-free Poison Help line?

Most often, callers are people taking care of children under age 6, although Poison Help is an important resource for everyone. Each year in the United States, about 1 million possible poisonings among children under 6 are reported. Most of these involve children between ages 2 and 3. More than half of the possible poisonings that are reported in the United States are for children under age 5.

Are caregivers of young children the only people who call the national toll-free Poison Help line?

No. Poisoning can happen to anyone, of any age. Adults may need the Poison Center's help, for example, if they are splashed with a poison at work, are bitten by a spider, or use a strong cleaning product without gloves. Misuse of medicines causes many poisonings in teens, adults, and the elderly. In fact, most deaths from poisoning happen in adults, not young children.

When is Poison Help the busiest?

Poison Centers are prepared to answer calls at any time of year and any time of day, and make preparations to staff appropriately during the busiest times and prepare so that calls will be answered quickly. The busiest time of year for Poison Centers is during the summer. Because children are out of school, they are more likely to come in contact with possible poisons.

They can be poisoned by some berries, flowers, insect bites and stings, car care products, charcoal lighter fluid, pest killers, and plant foods. The busiest times of the day for Poison Centers is during the evening, but remember that Poison Centers are prepared to handle calls at any time.

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General Questions on Poisons

What is a poison?

A poison is anything that can harm someone if it is (1) used in the wrong way, (2) used by the wrong person, or (3) used in the wrong amount. Poisons may harm you when they get in your eyes or on your skin. Other poisons may harm you if you breathe them in or swallow them. Call your local Poison Center by dialing **1-800-222-1222** for more information.

What are the different forms of poison?

Poison comes in four forms: solids (such as medicine pills or tablets), liquids (such as household cleaners including bleach), sprays (such as spray cleaners) and gases (such as carbon monoxide, or CO). Examples of poisons include:

- Alcohol
- Carbon monoxide (CO) gas
- Medicines, such as prescription, over-the-counter, and illegal drugs (for example, pain killers, cold and cough medicines, cocaine)
- Food supplements, such as vitamins, minerals, and herbal products
- Personal care products, such as nail polish and nail polish remover, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, mouthwash, hydrogen peroxide, makeup, soap, contact lens solution, lotion, baby oil, and diaper rash products
- Household chemicals, including bleach, detergent, furniture polish, cleanser, drain and toilet bowl cleaner, antifreeze, gasoline, paint, and varnish
- Plants, including many house plants and mushrooms
- Bites and stings, including snake and spider bites, and scorpion, wasp, and bee stings
- Hazardous chemicals at work and in the environment

What does a poisoned person look like?

A poisoned person may or may not look, act, or feel sick. If you think someone has been poisoned, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) right away. DO NOT WAIT for signs of poisoning.

Why are so many poisonings related to children under age 6?

Children under age 6 are always exploring the world around them. This is the way they learn. It is normal behavior and should be allowed, when safe. What children see and can reach, they often put in their mouths. Parents and other caregivers must watch for this. They must teach children not to put strange things in their mouths.

As children begin to move and do more, risks increase. They can reach medicines and household products wherever they are stored. When children are crawling, they can find such products as drain cleaners stored under a kitchen sink or on the floor. As soon as children can stand, they can reach products on low tables. They can reach medicines in purses on beds. When children start to climb, they can reach medicine on counters or in medicine cabinets. These products should be locked up. They should be kept out of the child's reach even when safety containers are used. Never leave medicine or a household product unattended. Children act fast! They can get to a product and swallow it while you are answering the phone or doorbell. Take the child or product with you to answer the phone or doorbell.

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Household Products

My child likes to eat toothpaste. Is this dangerous?

Toothpaste contains fluoride. Fluoride can be dangerous in certain amounts. Usually there is not enough fluoride in a tube of toothpaste to cause a serious poisoning. But you should teach your child that eating toothpaste is not safe. Taking too much toothpaste can cause short- and long-term problems. If you think your child may have eaten toothpaste, call **1-800-222-1222** and get advice.

What should I do with the mercury from a broken thermometer?

If mercury is spilled and not cleaned up, it gives off fumes. These fumes are poisonous if breathed in. Any spilled mercury should be cleaned up fast. Do not vacuum up the mercury. Call **1-800-222-1222** for advice on cleaning up.

Can mouthwash be dangerous?

Yes, mouthwash often contains alcohol. To a young child, even a small amount of alcohol can be deadly.

Some mouthwash might taste good to a child. A child might drink a large amount of it. Many other personal care products contain alcohol (for example, germ killers for cleaning hands and acne treatment products). Keep all mouthwash and other personal care products locked up out of sight and out of reach of children.

Why is it dangerous to use drink containers to store household products and other strong chemicals?

Children and adults might think poisons stored in drink containers are drinks. Such mistakes can be deadly.

Is the lead in paint dangerous to children?

It could be. In the past, paints contained high levels of lead. But in 1971, Congress set safety standards for lead in paint products. The standards apply to paints or coatings on toys or other items used by children. But threats still exist from old buildings and some products. Children can be poisoned by eating paint chips or breathing dust from old lead paint. During remodeling and renovation projects, workers and families face danger when improperly removing paint from older buildings. These types of projects are among the major causes of lead poisoning in the home. Be aware that toys made in countries outside the United States can contain unsafe amounts of lead. Doctors can test children for lead poisoning. Call **1-800-222-1222** for advice if you are concerned.

What are some rules I can follow to prevent poisonings?

- Choose products in containers that are hard for children to open. Replace the cap tightly after using a product. Remember that no container can promise to keep children out.
- Keep all household products, other strong chemicals, and medicines locked up and out of sight.
- When products are in use, never let young children out of your sight. Take the child or product with you when answering the phone or doorbell.
- Keep products in the containers they came in.
- Leave product labels on all products. Read the label before using a product.
- Do not put lamps and candles that use lamp oil where children can reach them. Lamp oil is very poisonous if swallowed or inhaled.

- Take and give medicine in a well-lit area. Check the dosage every time.
- Avoid taking medicine in front of children. NEVER CALL MEDICINE CANDY.
- Clean out the medicine cabinet often. Get rid of medicines that have expired or are no longer needed. See the following section for safe disposal instructions.

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Medicine

I found some pills in an unlabeled bottle. How do I find out what they are?

Some Poison Centers can identify pills. Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) or your local pharmacy for more information.

Is it dangerous to take expired medicine?

Yes. Never take expired medicine because the medicine might not work, and it can be dangerous. The expiration date is there for your protection.

How can I get rid of medicines safely?

Get rid of medicines that have expired or are no longer needed. Ask your local pharmacist how you can return unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs to pharmaceutical take-back locations for safe disposal. If these programs are not available, take the unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers. Mix the drugs with an undesirable substance, such as kitty litter, and put them in waterproof containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags, to make sure that they are not found and used by people or animals. Throw these containers in the trash. Your Poison Center may have updated advice available for your area by calling **1-800-222-1222**.

Are adults at risk when they use medicines and household products?

Yes. Poisonings happen to adults. They may have trouble reading labels. They may fail to follow instructions, or they may mix medicines and alcohol together. Some people may confuse one medicine for another. Others may take too much of a medicine.

To avoid poisonings:

- Always read the label and follow instructions when taking medicines. If any questions arise, consult your pharmacist or doctor.
- Wear your glasses when reading medicine labels. Turn a light on for reading at night.
- Never mix medicines and alcohol. Never take more than the proper dosage or prescribed amount of medicine.
- Never take another person's prescription drugs.
- Tell your doctor what other medicines you are taking before he or she orders medicine for you.
- Never mix household products with other chemicals. Doing this can create poisonous gases.
- Keep products in the containers they came in.



What can people do to protect themselves from medicines that have been tampered with?

Most medicines come in packaging that prevents tampering. That doesn't mean it can't happen. Each person must be on the lookout. Here is how you can protect yourself and your family:

- Check the outer packaging. Look before you buy.
- Read the label. Over-the-counter medicines tell you on the label how to detect tampering.
- If you think there could be a problem with a drug or its package, show the store manager.
- Check the product inside after you open it. Look again before you take the product. If it looks strange, don't use it.
- Look for pills that are different from others in the package.
- Do not use any medicine from a package that has cuts, slices, tears or other marks.
- Never take medicine in the dark.
- Read the label and look at the medicine every time you take it.
- Lower chances of medicine errors by being alert!

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Pesticides or Pest Killers

What is DEET and is it harmful to children?

Most products that keep insects away contain DEET. DEET is safe if the right amount is used properly. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using products on children with no more than 6 to 10 percent DEET. Adults can safely use products with up to 30 percent DEET. Be careful when using DEET. Always read the label before using any bug repellent. Some contain 100 percent DEET. These products are very poisonous.

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Pets, Animals, Bites, and Stings

What should I do if my pet is poisoned?

Some Poison Centers offer help for poisoned animals. Others can refer you to the Animal Poison Control Center Helpline: 1-888-426-4435. Unlike the Poison Help line, which is free, there is a fee for calling the Animal Poison Control Center Helpline.

What should I do if I am bitten by an insect?

Some people are allergic to insect stings. To these people, a sting may cause serious problems and even death. Go to a hospital right away if you are stung and have any of these signs: hives, dizziness, breathing trouble, or swelling around the eyes and mouth. Be alert to insects that may bite or sting. After a sting, the site will show redness and swelling. It may be itchy and painful. Be careful around bees, wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets. If you are unsure if you have been stung, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).

What should I do if I am bitten by a snake?

If a poisonous snake bites you or someone you know, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) right away. The experts at your Poison Center will determine if the snake is poisonous. They will tell you what signs to watch for and what to do. If the snake is not poisonous, you will need to wash the wound. You also may need a tetanus booster shot. Check with your doctor to find out.

What should I do if I am bitten by a spider?

Most spider and tick bites do not cause harm. But, there are some spiders that can cause illness in some people. Two common spiders that can harm you are the female black widow and the brown recluse. A bite from one of these spiders can cause serious problems in a child, a senior, or a person in poor health. But these bites rarely cause death. If you or a loved one has been bitten by a spider, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**).

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Plants

What should I do if I or a loved one eats wild mushrooms?

Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) immediately, as only experts can tell poisonous mushrooms from safe mushrooms. Eating even a few bites of certain mushrooms can cause liver damage that can kill you, so call your Poison Center right away.

What should I do if I or a loved one eats wild berries?

Berries are often found on plants in the fall, and some can poison you. Berries may attract children. They may think these berries are just like the fruits at the food market. If you think someone ate one or more berries from a plant, call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) right away. Poison Center experts probably WON'T be able to identify the plant on the phone. So, before a poisoning occurs, learn the names of plants around your home.

What should I do if I come in contact with poisonous plants?

If you are allergic to poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac, touching it can cause blisters on your skin. Be sure that everyone in your family can identify these plants. Remember, "leaves of three, let it be." If someone touches poison ivy, poison sumac, or poison oak, rinse right away with plenty of running water for at least 5 minutes. Unless you are a plant expert, do not pick your own foods to eat in the wild. Poison hemlock and water hemlock can be fatal to people. Their roots can look like wild carrots or parsnips. Call the national toll-free Poison Help line (**1-800-222-1222**) if you are unsure.

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Carbon Monoxide (CO)

What is CO and where does it come from?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas that is poisonous. It has no color or smell. It is produced under certain conditions when fuel is burned. Cars, appliances, furnaces, and gas dryers can give off CO.

What is CO poisoning?

CO takes the place of oxygen in the blood. Without oxygen, the heart, lungs, brain, and other body parts cannot work properly. Signs of CO poisoning are like signs of the flu. They include upset stomach, tiredness, and headaches. If CO poisoning is not treated, it can cause seizures and even death.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to CO?

Get outside to get fresh air. Call **1-800-222-1222**. If you feel better when you are out of your home and worse when you return, CO may be present. If you notice this, call the fire department. Have the fire department check for CO in your house. If CO is present, the source must be repaired before it is safe to return home.

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National

POISON PREVENTION WEEK PLANNER



www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov

POISON CENTERS: MAKING THE RIGHT CALL

Every 8 Seconds...Someone Calls a Poison Center.

What is a poisoning?

A poison exposure occurs when a person swallows, breathes, touches, or gets splashed in the eye with something that can cause sickness or death. Poisoning is a matter of dosage—too much of anything can be dangerous. Products such as pain medicines and household cleaning products are common causes of poison exposures in the United States. Most consumer products are safe if label directions are followed, but some can be poisonous if used incorrectly.

Who gets poisoned?

In 2007, 2.5 million people were exposed to poisons. Almost 1.3 million of these occurred in children 5 years or younger. In the same year, almost 860,000 adults (people 20 years and older) called Poison Centers.

How do people get poisoned?

Most poisoning exposures are unintentional. Only about 13 percent are deliberate, due either to a suicide attempt or intentional misuse.

What are the leading causes of poisoning for children and adults?

Children

- Pain killers such as acetaminophen and similar medications
- Cosmetics such as perfume or nail polish, and personal care products such as deodorant and soap
- Cleaning products such as laundry detergent and floor cleaners

Adults

- Pain killers
- Sedatives (drugs used to reduce anxiety), hypnotics (sleeping pills), and antipsychotics (drugs used to treat mental illness)
- Household cleaning products



Where do people get poisoned?

Approximately 90 percent of poisonings occur inside the home.

Where can you get help for poisoning?

Your local Poison Center can be reached through the national toll-free Poison Help line at **1-800-222-1222**. Poison Centers are staffed by nurses, pharmacists, and physicians. They can help with poisoning emergencies and offer information on ways to keep your family safe. Poison Centers are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Service is available throughout the entire United States and many territories. Also, translation services are available in 161 languages. The call is free and confidential.

Why call a Poison Center?

About 70 percent of people who call a local Poison Center get the help they need over the telephone without having to go to a doctor or the hospital.

For more information, call your local Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222** or visit www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov and www.aapcc.org.

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POISON PREVENTION WEEK PLANNER



www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov

UNITED STATES POISON CENTERS: 1-800-222-1222

Alabama

- Alabama Poison Center – Tuscaloosa, AL
- Regional Poison Control Center – Birmingham, AL

Alaska

- Served by Oregon Poison Center – Portland, OR

Arizona

- Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center – Tucson, AZ
- Banner Poison Control Center – Phoenix, AZ

Arkansas

- Arkansas Poison and Drug Information Center – Little Rock, AR

California

- California Poison Control System – Fresno/Madera Division – Madera, CA
- California Poison Control System – Sacramento Division – Sacramento, CA
- California Poison Control System – San Diego Division – San Diego, CA
- California Poison Control System – San Francisco Division – San Francisco, CA

Colorado

- Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center – Denver, CO

Connecticut

- Connecticut Poison Center – Farmington, CT



Delaware

- The Poison Control Center – Philadelphia, PA

District of Columbia

- National Capital Poison Center – Washington, D.C.

Florida

- Florida Poison Information Center – Jacksonville – Jacksonville, FL
- Florida Poison Information Center – Miami – Miami, FL
- Florida Poison Information Center – Tampa – Tampa, FL

Georgia

- Georgia Poison Center – Atlanta, GA

Hawaii

- Served by Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center – Denver, CO

Idaho

- Served by Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center – Denver, CO

Illinois

- Illinois Poison Center – Chicago, IL

Indiana

- Indiana Poison Center – Indianapolis, IN

Iowa

- Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center – Sioux City, IA

Kansas

- Mid-America Poison Control Center – Kansas City, KS

Kentucky

- Kentucky Regional Poison Center – Louisville, KY

Louisiana

- Louisiana Poison Center – Shreveport, LA

Maine

- Northern New England Poison Center – Portland, ME

Maryland

- Maryland Poison Center – Baltimore, MD
- Also served by the National Capital Poison Center – Washington, D.C.

Massachusetts

- Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention – Boston, MA

Michigan

- Children's Hospital of Michigan – Detroit, MI

Minnesota

- Hennepin Regional Poison Center – Minneapolis, MN

Mississippi

- Mississippi Poison Control Center – Jacksonville, MS

Missouri

- Missouri Regional Poison Center – St. Louis, MO

Montana

- Served by Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center – Denver, CO

Nebraska

- Nebraska Regional Poison Center – Omaha, NE

Nevada

- Served by Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center – Denver, CO

New Hampshire

- Served by Northern New England Poison Center – Portland, ME

New Jersey

- New Jersey Poison Information and Education System – Newark, NJ

New Mexico

- New Mexico Poison and Drug Information Center – Albuquerque, NM

New York

- Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center – Mineola, NY
- New York City Poison Control Center – New York, NY
- The Ruth A. Lawrence Poison and Drug Information Center – Rochester, NY
- Upstate New York Poison Center – Syracuse, NY
- Western New York Poison Center – Buffalo, NY

North Carolina

- Carolinas Poison Center – Charlotte, NC

North Dakota

- Served by Hennepin Regional Poison Center – Minneapolis, MN

Ohio

- Central Ohio Poison Center – Columbus, OH
- Cincinnati Drug and Poison Information Center – Cincinnati, OH
- Northern Ohio Poison Center at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital – Cleveland, OH

Oklahoma

- Oklahoma Poison Control Center – Oklahoma City, OK

Oregon

- Oregon Poison Center – Portland, OR

Pennsylvania

- Pittsburgh Poison Center – Pittsburgh, PA
- The Poison Control Center – Philadelphia, PA

Puerto Rico

- Puerto Rico Poison Center, Inc. – San Juan, PR

South Carolina

- Palmetto Poison Center – Columbia, SC

South Dakota

- Served by Hennepin Regional Poison Center – Minneapolis, MN

Tennessee

- Tennessee Poison Center – Nashville, TN

Texas

- Central Texas Poison Center – Temple, TX
- North Texas Poison Center – Dallas, TX
- South Texas Poison Center – San Antonio, TX
- Southeast Texas Poison Center – Galveston, TX
- Texas Panhandle Poison Center – Amarillo, TX
- West Texas Regional Poison Center – El Paso, TX

Utah

- Utah Poison Control Center – Salt Lake City, UT

Vermont

- Served by Northern New England Poison Center – Portland, ME

Virginia

- Blue Ridge Poison Center – Charlottesville, VA
- Virginia Poison Center – Richmond, VA
- Also served by the National Capital Poison Center – Washington, D.C.

Washington

- Washington Poison Center – Seattle, WA

West Virginia

- West Virginia Poison Center – Charleston, WV

Wisconsin

- Wisconsin Poison Center – Milwaukee, WI

Wyoming

- Served by Nebraska Regional Poison Center – Omaha, NE

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